




September 2024



PBF Investments in



 TOTAL
APPROVED \$39 M

 CURRENTLY
ACTIVE: \$18.8 M

Focusing on

-  Transitional justice
-  National peace architecture
-  Women and youth empowerment
-  Security Sector Reform
-  Land dispute resolution
-  CSOs institutional empowerment
-  Cross-border community resilience
-  Public accountability

Partners



PEACEBUILDING CHALLENGES

In 2016, the refusal of President Jammeh to accept defeat following the presidential election triggered a constitutional crisis and an intervention by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), supported by the African Union (AU), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The ECOWAS intervention resulted in Jammeh's peaceful departure and President Barrow's formal inauguration as The Gambia's third President in February 2017 (following his initial swearing-in at The Gambian Embassy in Dakar in January 2017). ECOWAS further deployed a stabilization force in The Gambia (ECOMIG), to ensure the safety and security of State institutions and the newly elected President. Since then, The Gambia has been undergoing a peaceful democratic transition. To show The Gambia's citizens the benefits of democratic and accountable governance, the new Government immediately sought the assistance of the United Nations and the international community for a reform agenda that included overhauling the country's institutions, laying a new foundation of respect for the rule of law, addressing past human rights' abuses, promoting national reconciliation and opening the political and civic space.

PEACEBUILDING FUND IN ACTION

The UNPeacebuilding Fund (PBF) was an early responder to the transition priorities in The Gambia, under the "Sustaining Peace Agenda" with critical support in the areas of transitional justice – including the establishment of the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), Security sector reform (SSR) and strengthened coordination in the President's Office. PBF is also providing support for the prevention of hate speech and conflict more broadly, through on-going projects in the post-TRRC phase. Women and youth empowerment has been, and remains a cross-cutting area of focus, especially regarding political and civic participation. Other programmatic priorities have included support to reintegration of returnees, community conflict prevention regarding access to land and natural resources management, as well as cross-border cooperation with Senegal in conflict-prone areas, for increased community resilience. The most recent PBF project approvals include support to the prevention and mitigation of climate-exacerbated conflicts as well as implementation of the SSR strategy, with a strong gender mainstreaming focus. Sustained support to the implementation of TRRC recommendations remains a PBF investment priority, with particular focus on key institutional reforms, alongside the continued need to strengthen accountability frameworks and political and civic space protection, the enhancement of more equitable management of natural resources, and revitalization of the social fabric following 22 years of autocratic rule.

■ PEACEBUILDING FUND IMPACT

PBF support has helped to catalyze critical peacebuilding processes since 2017, helping to prevent the country from collapsing into violence during the fragile political transition period. Due in part to PBF's assistance, the Government of The Gambia has made commendable progress in sustaining peace, particularly in the areas of transitional justice, security sector reform, judicial and civil service reform and inclusive economic development. Most notably, the transitional justice processes and the TRRC generated considerable public interest as well as the participation of victims and their families, witnesses and perpetrators in public hearings, statement-taking, investigations and outreach activities. Over 35,000 Gambians engaged in community-led outreach missions on the transitional justice process, including among the diasporas. In May 2022, the Government released its White Paper accepting 263 of the TRRC's recommendations out of 265. Further in May 2023, the Government released its five-year plan with a budget of \$150 million to implement the TRRC recommendations. The TRRC has been described by experts as the "most accessible truth commission in history".

In the framework of the transitional justice process, the Fund also supported the passage of critical legislations such as the Special Accountability Mechanism Bill, the Special Prosecutor's Office Bill, the Prevention of Torture Act, the Victims' Reparations Act, and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act. The Fund also facilitated the establishment and operationalization of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), paving the way for increased respect and awareness of human rights in The Gambia. The NHRC is currently independently monitoring and publicly reporting on the Government's implementation of the TRRC recommendations. Such transparency is crucial to enable awareness-raising and enhanced understanding of on-going efforts towards national healing, reconciliation, and non-recurrence.

KEY FIGURES REGARDING THE TRRC

- ▶ 23 public hearing sessions were held, during which 392 witnesses testified, including 238 victims and 100 women.
- ▶ Over 2,800 videos of live footage were produced and made publicly accessible.
- ▶ 66 religious and traditional leaders, including 27 women, were sensitized on their role in reconciliation initiatives, and 119 youth leaders, including 54 women, were engaged in Youth Leadership Fora.
- ▶ Over 50,000 Gambians were engaged in community outreach on transitional justice.
- ▶ 90% of Gambians from a sample of 1,200 felt that the TRRC performed very well or well, according to a 2020 perception survey.

The Fund has also been supporting increased participation of women in influential decision-making positions, including on the political scene, as it is currently facilitating advocacy for the establishment of quota systems for women in politics. On-going projects have helped double the number of elected women local councillors and have also brought together a large number of women-led CSOs to advocate with one voice against the repeal of the 2015 ban on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The PBF also supported efforts to enhance inclusive inter-party dialogue, notably through the Inter-Party Committee and its youth/women's branches, leading to the signing of a peace pledge by all registered political parties ahead of the 2021 presidential election. A series of institutional dialogue mechanisms were also put in place to facilitate increased and continuous engagement between political leaders, decision-makers and citizens. This contributed to inform the design of more inclusive local councils strategic plans, building on the people's demands. As for addressing hate speech and fake news, the Fund supported the operationalization of the first-ever national fact-checking platform, 'FactCheck Gambia', which actively contributes to information integrity, through empowered media practitioners and youth more broadly, given their important use of digital technologies and social media.

■ PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION ENGAGEMENT

Since its initial engagement in 2017 in support of the democratic transition, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has mobilized international attention on the country's peacebuilding priorities on multiple occasions. High-level awareness-raising and meetings have focused on the on-going transitional justice and constitutional review processes, SSR, human rights, and women and youth empowerment. The Commission helped sustain international attention on The Gambia's efforts to advance the implementation of the TRRC recommendations through mobilizing political and financial support, building on the Government's implementation plan and the establishment of a dedicated Partners' Platform.